

Message Text

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ORIGIN HA-05

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TAGS: SREF, SHUM, TH, CB

SUBJECT: ALLEGED MISTREATMENT OF CAMBODIANS IN THAI
REFUGEE CAMPS

REF: (A) BANGKOK 22776; (B) STATE 200615; (C) BANGKOK
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1. JACK ANDERSON COLUMN ENTITLED "MISERY AND TORMENT FOR
CAMBODIANS" APPEARED IN AUGUST 15 WASHINGTON POST. PRESS
GUIDANCE PROVIDED TO PA BASED ON CONTENTS REFTEL A. SUB-
JECT DID NOT ARISE AT AUGUST 15 NOON BRIEFING.

2. BEGIN TEXT:

A. FOR TWO YEARS, WE HAVE BEEN WRITING ABOUT THE
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SLAUGHTER OF COUNTLESS THOUSANDS OF CAMBODIDANS
BY THE KHMER ROUGE COMMUNISTS WHO NOW CONTROL
THAT COUNTRY. THIS TRAGEDY SHOULD OUTRAGE DE-
CENT HUMAN BEINGS THE WORLD OVER.

B. NOW WE HAVE LEARNED, FROM FIRST-HAND ACCOUNTS,
THAT THE PITIFULLY FEW CAMBODIANS WHO MANAGE TO

FLEE ACROSS THE BORDER INTO NEIGHBORING THAILAND ARE BEING REWARDED WITH EVEN MORE MISERY AND TORMENT. THEY ARE CAST INTO REFUGEE COMPOUNDS WHERE THEY ARE BEATEN, RAPED AND SOMETIMES MURDERED.

C. FROM JULY 1977 UNTIL FEBRUARY OF THIS YEAR, REFUGEES TOLD US, THE THAI MILITIA AND BORDER POLICE TURNED AWAY OR SHOT MOST OF THE CAMBODIANS TRYING TO ENTER THAILAND. OUR SOURCES ESTIMATED THAT MORE THAN 1,000 CAMBODIANS WERE KILLED WHILE TRYING TO CROSS THE BORDER, ON THE GROUNDS THAT THEY WERE KHMER ROUGE AGENTS.

D. THAI AUTHORITIES AND STATE DEPARTMENT OFFICIALS DENIED THAT SUCH BLOODSHED OCCURRED. NEVERTHELESS, THE FLOW OF REFUGEES INTO THAILAND HAS SLOWED TO A TRICKLE. UPWARDS OF 600 CAMBODIANS A MONTH WERE CROSSING THE BORDER A YEAR AGO. ABOUT 40 A MONTH ARE NOW REACHING THAILAND. U.S. AND THAI OFFICIALS CLAIM THE DECREASE IS DUE TO THE FACT THAT THE KHMER ROUGE FORCES HAVE CLEARED THE POPULATION FROM THE BORDER AREAS.

E. THOSE WHO ARE NOW SUCCESSFUL IN THEIR BID FOR FREEDOM ARE IMMEDIATELY HUSTLED OFF TO INTERNATIONAL OFFICIAL USE

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MENT CENTERS FOR QUESTIONING BY THE THAI AUTHORITIES. CAMBODIANS WHO CANNOT PROVE THEY ARE GENUINE POLITICAL REFUGEES ARE SENT TO PRISON.

F. SOME ARE EVEN SENT BACK TO CAMBODIA, WHERE THEY FACE CERTAIN DEATH AT THE HANDS OF THE KHMER ROUGE.

G. FROM THE TEMPORARY DETENTION CENTERS, THE CAMBODIANS WHO HAVE BEEN CLEARED ARE MOVED TO PERMANENT REFUGEE CAMPS, WHERE THEY SOON LEARN THAT THEIR WOES ARE FAR FROM OVER. EACH FAMILY, NO MATTER HOW LARGE, IS ASSIGNED ONE ROOM IN A BARRACKS COMPLEX. THE FOOD THEY RECEIVE IS SUPERIOR TO THEIR CAMBODIAN FARE, BUT IT IS DISTRIBUTED SPASMODICALLY, AND THE AMOUNTS DIFFER FROM CAMP TO CAMP AND MONTH TO MONTH. THE THAI GUARDS ALSO MAN-HANDLE THE REFUGEES WITH IMPUNITY.

H. SITLEN KUNG, FOR EXAMPLE, SPENT NEARLY TWO

YEARS IN SARIN CAMP BEFORE HE FOUND ASYLUM IN THE UNITED STATES. TWO OF HIS BEST FRIENDS, HE TOLD OUR ASSOCIATE, TOM ROSENSTIEL, WERE SENT TO LIFE IMPRISONMENT BY A CAMP OFFICIAL NAMED SAMAN MAK SIMPLY BECAUSE HE DIDN'T LIKE THEM. KUNG AND HIS

BROTHER BOTH REPORTED THEY ONCE SAW A TRUCK LOAD OF FELLOW REFUGEES BEING HAULED TO JAIL FOR MINOR MISBEHAVIOR.

I. THE REFUGEES REFER TO THE CORRUPT AND BRUTAL CAMP COMMANDERS AS THE "THAI GODS". A FORMER CAMBODIAN SOLDIER RECALLED HOW THE "THAI GODS" MISTREATED A FAMILY INTERNED AT KAMPUT, A LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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NOTORIOUS CAMP ISOLATED IN A JUNGLE VALLEY.

J. "THE FAMILY HAD THREE DAUGHTERS", HE SAID. "THE THAI GOD CAME TO TAKE THEM. THE FAMILY TRIED TO SNEAK THE DAUGHTERS AWAY. THE FATHER WAS LEFT IN THE CAMP. THE THAI GOD BEAT THE FATHER UNTIL HE WAS UNCONSCIOUS".

K. CAMP INMATES ARE FORBIDDEN TO LEAVE THEIR ENCLAVES TO SEEK WORK, AND FOOD SUPPLIES SOMETIMES DWINDLE. AN AGED MAN WHO SPENT TWO YEARS AT KAMPUT SAID, "SOME DON'T HAVE ENOUGH TO EAT SOMETIMES. THEY GO OUT TO WORK AND WHEN THEY ARE CAUGHT, THEY ARE KICKED. SOME WENT TO WORK AND WERE SHOT TO DEATH".

L. SUCH PHYSICAL ABUSE, ACCORDING TO THE REFUGEES, IS COMMONPLACE. THE SITUATION IS EVEN WORSE WHEN THE CAMP OVERSEERS DRINK TOO MUCH. "IF THEY SEE US WHEN THEY'RE DRUNK, THEY KICK US," SAID ONE CAMBODIAN. "IF WE FIGHT BACK, THEY JUST LAUGH."

M. AMERICAN OBSERVERS CONFIRMED THAT THEY HAD WITNESSED PHYSICAL ABUSE OF THE REFUGEES. THEY ALSO TOLD US OF MURDERS WHICH HAVE OCCURRED IN THE CAMPS.

N. FOOTNOTE: DESPITE THE HARSH TREATMENT OF REFUGEES IN THAILAND, IT SHOULD BE NOTED THAT THIS IS THE ONLY COUNTRY WHICH ACCEPTS ALL CAMBODIANS WHO ESCAPE. THE UNITED STATES, FOR EXAMPLE, HAS ADMITTED ONLY ABOUT 2,000 CAMBODIAN REFUGEES TO DATE. EARLIER THIS MONTH, THE SENATE PASSED AN LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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AMENDMENT INTRODUCED BY SEN. BOB DOLE (R-KAN.)
WHICH WOULD LAY THE GROUND-WORK TO PERMIT 15,000
CAMBODIANS NOW IN THAILAND TO EMIGRATE TO THE
UNITED STATES. REP. STEPHEN SOLARZ (D-N.Y.) WILL
INTRODUCE A SIMILAR BILL IN THE HOUSE. END TEXT.
VANCE

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